

News Release



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California State Parks Hosts Southern California Beach Safety Challenge May 20 – 27

California State Parks is joining forces with the California State Lifeguard Association and the California Surf Lifesaving Association to sponsor the *Southern California Beach Safety Challenge* on May 20 – 27. The event coincides with the United States Lifesaving Association's (USLA) National Beach Safety Week and will promote water safety awareness throughout southern California. The "Challenge" is a grueling eight-day, 120 mile endurance event where lifeguard and water safety professionals will run, swim, and paddle from the Mexican Border to Huntington State Beach in order to raise public awareness for drowning prevention.

Every year American lifeguards perform more than 70,000 open water rescues, according to statistics collected by the USLA. Despite these efforts, drowning continues to be the third leading cause of death in the U.S., claiming over 4,000 lives each year. Tragically, these statistics are mirrored in California's state park system that was visited by nearly 90 million visitors last year. "Sadly, drowning has been the leading cause of accidental death in our state parks for decades" said Ken Kramer, president of the California State Lifeguard Association. According to Kramer, "what makes drowning so very tragic is that it is 100% preventable. ZERO is the only acceptable drowning statistic in our profession".

The Beach Safety Challenge provides a chance for local lifeguards and water safety personnel to make a difference in our communities, said John Anderson, state park lifeguard and event coordinator. "We are going to be wrecked by the end of it, but if we can prevent even one drowning tragedy it will be well worth a little pain" he said. The event begins on Monday, May 20th at the YMCA Camp Surf in Imperial Beach. Participants will head south to the Tijuana River and then north finishing on Memorial Day at Huntington State Beach. The public is invited to support the participants as they pass through each beach community. For more information, contact your local lifeguard agency or event coordinator John Anderson at (562) 260-1124.

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